



## IN LEVI'S WORDS...

Conventional wisdom suggests that "alumni journals," particularly if they seek to cultivate contributors' positive regard, avoid issues of dispute and contention; all the more so, if those issues accurately reflect the institution's daily life. Pardes has not usually relied on convention and its purported wisdom. Long before it became acceptable in traditional Jewish schools, Pardes provided an education that insists upon men's and women's equal intellectual and spiritual capabilities. Men and women learn the same texts—together. And while the equality of men and women is more readily conceded, or at least paid lip service, co-education is still largely forbidden or highly suspect.

How difficult then for students and faculty to wrestle with the dynamics of Pardes' (completely voluntary) public prayer. For Jews who accept the discipline of *halacha*, egalitarian davening is deemed unacceptable. It is one thing to delight in the strengths of a *beit midrash* luxuriant in מחלוקת מרוב שמיעות/intense debate seeking Transcendent value and truth; and to encourage students' and teachers' individuality and personal search. It's quite another to attempt to embody

*continued on p. 8*

**COMMENT:** I guess there's no getting around the fact that times are changing, a realization I came to the other day while thinking about Pardes then and now.

Then was 1980-81, the year I was in attendance. Having ridden the floodtide of the second great awakening of the women's movement in America in the 1970's, I arrived at Pardes with a two-fold agenda. I desperately needed to stoke the furnaces of my Jewishness and refuel for the long haul. But I also needed to do this in a place where my Jewishness and my feminism would be mutually affirming, hoping that whatever claim feminism had on me would be revealed as synonymous with divine intent.

Imagine my surprise, after plumbing the depths of Bereshit, to discover that the woman question was not even an afterthought. I found some solace in the knowledge that my concerns were taken seriously by my teachers and fellow students and in the belief that the

more women learn, the more to which we can lay claim. In my year, the question of "women in Judaism" was a subject for seminar learning and discussion. It was not an issue that galvanized the student body. Nowadays, we see far more confrontation and debate, a tribute to Pardes' openness and a sign of the times.

One cause of this change is that today Pardes has a greater number of students. Instead of a few isolated voices expressing a given opinion, there are now enough to form a critical mass. Secondly, today's concerns seem different, more ideological than theological. We see this in the "Pardes People" articles devoted to women's roles, where the issues are more about what women should or shouldn't do, than on the nature of revelation and divine intent (with regard to women). Finally, one cannot help but note the sectarian disposition of many of today's arguments. It seems as if students arrive at Pardes more heavily armored in viewpoints held by one or another movement of Judaism.

On the positive side, there is a certain educational value to be derived from honest, heated debate and the creative tension that ensues. We see this in the intellectual force of the arguments about what should be the norm in the *beit midrash* with regard to women. Two issues that galvanized Pardes last year were whether a woman could read the *Megilla* for the entire community, and the possibility of requiring ten men and ten women to constitute a *minyan*. This, in turn, raised the question of how students view Pardes.

The story of what took place and how these issues were resolved can be pieced together from the interviews in

*continued on p. 8*

### IN THIS ISSUE:

IN LEVI'S WORDS . . . . .	1
EDITOR'S COMMENT, Jane Kimchi	1
PARDES PEOPLE:	
Judaism and the Woman Question	2
OP ED: Walking a Fine Line, by Steve Mazer . . . . .	4
FACULTY PROFILE: Leah Rosenthal	7
NEWSBRIEFS . . . . .	7
DESIGN YOUR OWN PARDES CLASS . . . . .	7
THE PARDES CONNECTION, News of classmates and staff . . . . .	8

**WENDY GOLDBERG '92-'93, is from Minneapolis, Minnesota. She received her B.A. in Psychology from Brandeis University in 1988, and her M.A. from The Jewish Theological Seminary. She is working as a day school teacher in Minnesota.**

I was in favor of the proposal discussed at Pardes last year that would have required ten women, as well as ten men, for a *minyan*. Within an Orthodox framework, it defined *minyan* as a community of prayer consisting of more than only men. It was a way for men and women to feel that women are an essential part of the *minyan*, accountable both to the *minyan* and to God.

As for the question that arose about the *Megilla* reading, I feel it would have been a positive educational experience for students to witness its discussion by the teachers. My understanding is that it would have been halachically possible to have a woman read the *Megilla* for everyone at Pardes. Unfortunately, the faculty decided against an event that could have been equally open to the fullest participation of women and men.

Despite the intensity of feelings engendered, the outcome was positive—three different *Megilla* readings on Purim morning, side by side. Many people from within and without the Pardes community found at least one reading which suited them. It's unfortunate that not everyone sensed the strength and range of this pluralism.

The egalitarian *minyan*, which met daily for *mincha* (afternoon prayer), once or twice a week for *shaharit* (morning prayer), and monthly for *Rosh Hodesh*, was a valuable component of Pardes. It gave students who

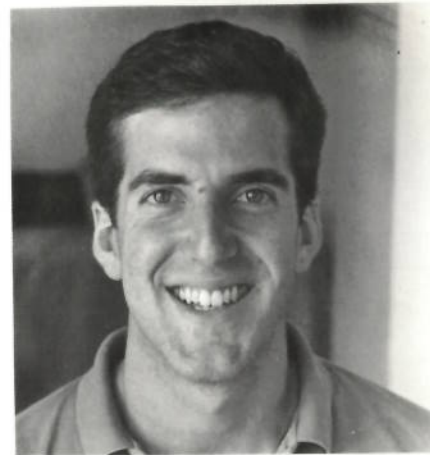


wanted to *daven* and learn synagogue skills a place to go if they weren't comfortable with the halachic format. However it would have been helpful to have had a faculty member participate in order to answer halachic questions as they arose and to provide moral support. A faculty member might have fostered among us both a greater halachic awareness and a feeling of responsibility to the group, much as Meir Schweiger did for the traditional *minyan*. An educated, halachically aware, egalitarian group can provide a fertile ground for seeking connection to God. Pardes provides us with the education, but, in my opinion, it needs to do more to help students realize the potential contained in what they learn. •



**MICHAEL (SHAI) CHERRY '92-'93, graduated from Claremont McKenna College with a degree in philosophy, politics and economics. This Fall he began a Ph.D. program in Jewish thought at Brandeis University.**

The Pardes administration quietly offers the egalitarian *minyan* its support. We have been provided with a *sefer torah* and an *aron kodesh*. Pardes, however, does not sponsor the egalitarian *minyan*, nor should it. Pardes is unorthodox, *not* non-Orthodox. The fine line that Pardes maintains between unorthodoxy and non-orthodoxy parallels a struggle in which many of us engage: to embrace tradition and modernity while preserving Jewish and personal integrity. The diversity of Pardes, represented by the *minyanim*, the students, and, to lesser degree, the faculty, serves as an inspiring example. •



**MATT GERBER '92-'93, is from Seattle, Washington. He received his B.A. from Haverford College in Sociology with a concentration in Peace Studies.**

My early religious observance was egalitarian, but while at college I began to explore aspects of traditional observance. A summer at Pardes (1990) was my first intensive experience with learning. When I came to Pardes for the year, I was already fairly observant.

I started *davening* with the traditional *minyan* at Pardes, in part because I was looking for a daily *minyan*, and in part because I wanted to see how a traditional *minyan* would feel. I also felt I would learn more by *davening* with the faculty. Due to my eagerness to participate in a daily *minyan*, I was asked to be *gabbai* and accepted. I find it interesting that some people made assumptions about my stance on various halachic issues just because I was *gabbai* of the traditional *minyan*. The truth is, one of my reasons for coming to Pardes was to continue developing my position on issues such as the Orthodox view of women and *tefilla* (prayer). I wanted to understand why Orthodox Judaism doesn't have egalitarian services so that if I were to choose to stand outside of *halacha*, I would know what I was doing and why.

The question that plagued me all year was how to act while in the process of deciding exactly what I think. Should I be willing to "dive in" and do what the *halacha* says I should do, simply because it is required. And what does it mean to be *required* to do something? I don't like taking the easy way out by letting convenience dictate whether or not I do something. I see *halacha* as a system of immeasurable value which has shaped and sustained the Jewish people. Yet my modern upbringing makes me ambiva-

lent about undertaking an Orthodox way of life. For example, I have a hard time accepting the fact that when there are nine men and one woman, who with equal seriousness want to daven, the *halacha* doesn't recognize that group as a *minyan*.

I'm not really sure how to resolve this tension. Putting myself in a situation where I could dispense with thinking about issues would be irresponsible and unrealistic. I believe that one of Pardes's strengths is exposing students to a range of halachic positions. One can ask three or four teachers a question and receive a range of answers all within the realm of *halacha*. By confronting these issues at Pardes, I hoped to bring them to some kind of resolution by acquiring the skills and textual foundation that would enable me to find a comfortable place for myself vis-a-vis the *halacha*.

I was very interested in the issue of the "ten and ten" proposal that emerged last year, requiring ten women as well as ten men to constitute a *minyan*. While I understood some of the halachic complications of such a proposal, the idea of making everyone responsible and accountable to the community of the *minyan* was appealing to me. I'm sorry that it fell through.

One thing I have realized about wanting to change traditional practice is that it is important to examine one's motives for change. There's a fine line between political axe-grinding and heaven-fearing actions. As *gabbai*, I called men (if they wanted me to) for an *aliya* using their mother's and father's name. It was my way of saying that even if I was in an Orthodox setting, I didn't have to cut myself off from my egalitarian upbringing.

As for a second major issue, that of the different *Megilla* readings, I went to the halachic *Megilla* reading partly because I had rarely ever been to one. I also felt an obligation to go to an activity of the traditional *minyan*. As with the "ten and ten" proposal, I was not interested in becoming personally involved with the politics of the situation—not because I wasn't concerned with or sympathetic to the issue, but because I am usually more comfortable following the halachic approach. Yet when all is said and done, I am still struggling to find what feels right for me. Despite the fact that I seem to be moving in the direction of Orthodoxy, I'm not at the point where I can say to myself, "I'm doing this because this is *the way*." \*

**TOBIE STRAUSS '92-'93, received her B.A. in Middle East Languages and Cultures and in Music from Columbia College in 1992. Born and raised in Summit, New Jersey, she is studying this year at the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem and at Hebrew University.**

When I was five years old, my family's Conservative synagogue had a male *hazan* and did not allow women to have *aliyot*, let alone lead services or count in the *minyan*. I had never seen a woman lead *tefillot* (prayers). But when people asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up, I said: "A cantor." It simply did not occur to me that my Jewish world might not allow me to be a cantor because I was a girl.

Fortunately, the Jewish world of my childhood did not shatter my innocent faith in my right to do whatever my potential allowed. At the Conservative day school I attended, all the children learned to lead *tefillot* in first grade. Within a year or two of becoming Bat Mitzva, I knew how to read not only Tora and *Haftara*, but also all the *Megillot*, and since then, Tora reading has been an integral part of my life as a Jew. The synagogue, day school, and summer camp I attended all encouraged me to read Tora (by then my synagogue had become egalitarian), and I developed a deep sense of assurance about my "right" to do so.

I came to Pardes, thus, with a strong, non-Orthodox, Jewish background. I wanted to learn, and Pardes was the most intensive of the non-coercive places I could find, enabling me to learn a lot without feeling uncomfortable. I had also heard nothing but warm praise for the faculty. I hoped Pardes's declared "commitment to co-education," a bold and rare stance in the Orthodox world, reflected an overall stance that was both liberal and courageous—pioneering, if you will—in the context of the Orthodox world today.

The issue of courage in dealing with the *halacha* acquired sudden importance for me before Purim. Having heard that the *Megilla* reading was a Pardes community event and that Meir Schweiger did an outstanding and dramatic reading of the *Megilla*, I wanted desperately to attend—but I also wanted to read *Megilla*, as I had for the last ten years. I knew that the *halacha* on this issue was ambivalent—that is, it reflected two positions, one of which would permit a woman to read the *Megilla* for men. I

reasoned that the *Megilla* reading was supposed to be a Pardes "community event," and having a woman read *Megilla* would be one measure that Pardes could take to make the reading truly more of a *community* event, and not just one more *tefilla* to which the entire Pardes community was invited. I believe that many, if not most, of the students at Pardes are uncomfortable with the Orthodox exclusion of women from leadership roles in the *tefilla*. Pardes could show sensitivity to and sympathy for its students' sensibilities by courageously following a halachic view that is not the accepted position in nearly any Orthodox community today.



I approached a faculty member and asked if a woman could read *Megilla* at Pardes' community reading. The faculty member consulted a widely respected halachic authority, whose answer seemed to afford the faculty a way to allow a woman to read *Megilla* at Pardes. The faculty discussed the issue and decided not to let a woman read. The statement they released offered two main explanations for the decision: first, concern that a woman might not be able to discharge the halachic obligation of the men present and, second, lack of precedent in mainstream Orthodoxy for allowing a woman to read for men. Furthermore, the statement continued: "Machon Pardes faculty does not see its role to be the avant-garde of change in traditional halachic practice."

I understand the first concern, which is purely halachic. As for the second, I cannot deny the lack of precedent, nor do I have a right to tell Pardes or its faculty how they should define their role in the halachic system. But I think that Pardes' history of dealing with halachic issues involving women's role in the Pardes com-

munity demonstrates ambivalence and inconsistency. On some issues, Pardes adopted policies that were "avant-garde" at the time. On other issues, Pardes chose to maintain the Orthodox status quo. For example, teaching men and women together—and teaching women *Gemara* (Talmud) at all—were, though not entirely without precedent, certainly well outside mainstream Orthodox practice when Pardes was founded. Many faculty members justify the decision to include women fully in the academic program by saying that they see learning Tora as the core of Judaism, and were therefore willing to take a stand on this issue. Ritual, however, is less central, they claim, so they did not feel compelled to depart from the norm on ritual issues.

This argument ignores the fact that Pardes has occasionally departed from mainstream Orthodox practice on ritual issues, as well. For instance, Pardes decided many years ago to let women make *kiddush* for the whole community. Although, in the case of *kiddush*, the *halacha* clearly allows women to discharge men's obligation, most Orthodox institutions avoid having them do so, probably because of reluctance to have women serve as community representatives in public ritual. The mainstream Orthodox view regards it as "immodest" for a woman, and/or "dishonorable" to her community for her to represent the community in public ritual, even if the *halacha* permits it.

Pardes's policies are inconsistent on the issue of women's role as community representatives in public ritual. On the one hand, Pardes intimates in the faculty statement that it shares mainstream Orthodoxy's sociological position: "*Magen Avraham* cites additionally that women should not read for men because of *kvod hatzibbur* (public honor), similar to Torah reading." Conformity to mainstream norms and reluctance to let women represent the community in public ritual are policies reflected not only in the *Megilla* decision, but also in the faculty decision not to allow women to lead *kabbalat shabbat* at the Pardes *minyan* on *shabbatonim*. In the case of *kabbalat shabbat* within the Pardes community, there is no halachic issue involved; the only reasons to forbid it are lack of precedent and/or an underlying extra-halachic ideology that demands exclusion of women for sociological reasons. Yet, on the other hand, Pardes defied both the practice and the sociological position of mainstream Orthodoxy by allowing

women to make *kiddush* for the whole community. If Pardes was willing to step outside the mainstream on the issue of *kiddush*, then to be consistent, it should do so on the issue of *kabbalat shabbat* as well.

Levi Lauer has asserted frequently that "at Pardes, men and women are treated as spiritual and intellectual equals." If he is talking about the classroom, then he is right; but my spirit and intellect do not recognize the classroom as their boundaries. I challenge Pardes to make Levi's words true; and if it cannot, then it should carefully qualify its claims of equal treatment.



**DAVID LERNER** is from Teaneck, New Jersey. He got his B.A. in Politics and Philosophy at Columbia University in 1993, and will be studying rabbinics at The Jewish Theological Seminary.

I came to Pardes as an observant-egalitarian Jew. Among the many attractions of Pardes, was my understanding that it was possible to form an egalitarian *minyan*. When I arrived, I found that Pardes' *minyan* was a traditional one. If students wanted an egalitarian *minyan*, we would have to organize it ourselves. Since an egalitarian *minyan* was essential to me, I spoke to Levi and offered to take responsibility for getting it going.

We started from scratch, put up signs on the student bulletin board and rounded up a core group, beginning with a weekly *shaharit* (morning) service on Thursday and daily *mincha* (afternoon prayer).

In December we talked about ex-

*continued on p. 6*

## Walking A Fine Line

by Steve Mazer '90-'91, '92-'93.

*Steve has a B.A. in economics from New York University and worked as a litigation paralegal at a Wall Street law firm before coming to Pardes. Currently a member of Pardes' office staff, he organizes student activities.*

"Issues," and the "women's issue" in particular, came up constantly during my first year at Pardes, but I avoided them much of the time. Partly out of humility, partly out of insecurity, I decided that my preconceptions, prejudices and gut reactions should be silenced, at least temporarily, in order to hear the voice of the texts for the first time. It was a policy that proved very beneficial to my Jewish education.

So why am I in the "women's issue" edition of HAVRUTA? Because after my initial Jewish experience at Pardes, I started the much more difficult process of trying to lead a Jewish life; because in attempting to do so according to traditional practice, I am both inspired by the *halacha's* creativity and insight, and disturbed by many of its requirements; and because I have a strong emotional attachment to Pardes and care deeply about where it is and where it is going.

I didn't remain detached from those issues permanently; it was never my intention to do so. Now, as a more educated participant in Judaism, I question, argue and struggle, in true Pardes fashion. That the *halacha's* treatment of women, in certain areas, directly conflicts with my modern, Western views of fairness and equality is a source of much personal angst. The prohibition of women being witnesses in rabbinic courts, for example, seems to do no more than reinforce antiquated stereotypes about women's lack of intellectual and emotional stability. More pressing is the tragedy of *agunot*, women "anchored" to recalcitrant husbands who refuse to grant a divorce. This problem is screaming for a solution, yet the current rabbinic establishment seems to lack the courage to address it.

I would feel more comfortable with my halachic commitment if changes in these areas would take place. But as important as they are, they are not the gender-related issues that most frequently come up at Pardes.

Davening is a different story. It is a relevant issue at Pardes every day. It fosters a sense of community for some and simultaneously destroys any sense of community for others. It is where I

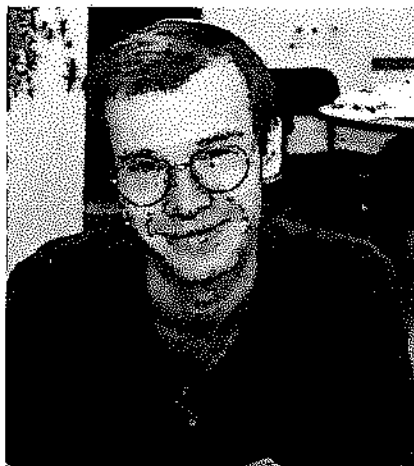
draw my line, at least for now, regarding major halachic tinkering.

I would find it appealing to grant women equal status in the act of davening, were it not for the implications of such a move for their obligations in prayer (and, it must be stressed, time-bound, positive *mitzvot* in general). If we say that women may be equal partners in the *minyan*, do we (must we) say that they, like men, are obligated to daven three times a day? There may be a halachic middle ground, but middle-ground, halachically-based solutions are not what I am confronted with in the Pardes environment.

In my experience, the students who promote the egalitarian cause in the name of fairness, equality and modernity, are usually the same ones who reject the binding nature of *halacha*; who see it as, at best, a set of optional guidelines; who consider men and women to be equally *non-obligated* in any category of observance. Thus, they simply sidestep the entire problem of thrusting upon women a set of obligations that would not necessarily be in their best interest. For sure, side-stepping is a choice one can make. But if you believe in the divinity of the Torah and see the *halacha* as our best attempt to live out the divine plan, the solution of rights without responsibilities is not an option.

Differing ideologies inevitably produce tension between students now and then. Happily, though, an "us versus them" atmosphere is the exception rather than the rule. A sense of mutual respect—understanding if not agreement—usually prevails. I really *do* understand how women can be made to feel like second class citizens in the public domain of Jewish life (though the problem is more acute due to the Diaspora mentality that defines the center of Jewish life as the *beit kneset*). At the same time, my egalitarian friends understand and respect the conflict I face as someone trying to live within the halachic system. Passions rise appreciably, however, when the issue turns from students' relationships with each other to each student's view of Pardes: how Pardes sees and presents itself; what function it should serve; what positions it does or should take on these important issues.

The two matters that came up recently—the idea of not commencing davening until ten men and ten women were present, and the possibility of a woman reading the *Megilla* on everyone's behalf at the traditional *minyan*—forced Pardes to step back and re-evaluate itself somewhat. It also prompted many students to cast a strong



vote as to what Pardes should be.

These were interesting proposals, because they did not fit neatly in the categories of "halachic" or "non-halachic." We would be re-defining the davening experience (indeed, the *halacha*): no *hazarat hashatz*, *kedusha*, *kriat haTorah* or *kaddish* without ten women, even in the presence of ten men. Still, we would not technically be counting women as part of the *minyan* (recall that ten men were still required). A woman reading the *Megilla* on behalf of men is simply not normative halachic practice. Nonetheless, there are opinions that a woman may discharge a man's obligation. In the end neither came about: the *minyan* due to lack of sufficient interest on the part of the women (though halachic considerations would have nixed the idea in any case), the *Megilla* due to a decision of the faculty that it was not Pardes's place to break new ground in this area.

I will say honestly that I was disappointed, even a little angered, by many students' approach to these issues and, more generally, their attitude about the nature and function of Pardes.

Within a halachic framework, Pardes is the most tolerant and open institution in the Jewish world. No demands of belief or observance are imposed on students. (As someone who appreciates a gentle push sometimes, I think Pardes is often too non-coercive.) Pardes not only allows an egalitarian prayer group, but facilitates it in every possible way (providing a room, an *aron kodesh*, a *sefer torah*). The *mechitza* for traditional davening is low and divides the *beit midrash* into two equal parts. Most significantly, all the texts of our tradition are open completely and equally to women and men, learning together.

Most students are genuinely appreciative of the environment Pardes tries to create, and of the fine line on which it walks. Yet there is still the feeling

among some—the *Megilla* issue brought it out strongly—that the fact that Pardes is *already* on the fringe of halachic practice in many areas almost mandates that it go further, that it is a show of hypocrisy for Pardes to weigh each issue separately and not be "progressive" on all fronts. It is an argument that, if accepted, would do great harm to Pardes.

Being on the fringe is not a bad thing. Halachically speaking, someone has to go where no one has gone before; that is how change is effected. If there is a sound halachic basis for a woman's reading to fulfill a man's obligation to hear the *Megilla*, even though it be completely outside of normative practice, then I'm all for it and think it should absolutely be done—but *not* by Pardes.

There is a limit to how far out on a halachic limb one institution can go before it loses its credibility and acceptance within the halachic community. So the question is: Is it or is it not important for Pardes to have a degree of credibility and acceptance within the halachic community? The consequences of each choice make the answer clear.

Pardes opens all texts to women, provides a co-ed environment, and demonstrates extreme (and practical) tolerance toward non-traditional points of view. Doing so represents a conscious and courageous deviation from what many consider to be acceptable halachic practice. Pardes has done so for the sake of providing high quality Jewish learning to those who would have been otherwise unwilling or unable to receive it. It has therefore achieved credibility and respect within a large segment of the halachic community—excluding most of the *haredi* (ultra Orthodox) world, but including many who are considerably more "right wing" than Pardes.

And credibility means influence. It means that people take you seriously. It means they *listen* to what you have to say, even if it contradicts some of their long held beliefs about how things should be done. It means they take into account the *positive* side of some of your actions, even if they disagree with them.

Were Pardes to choose its battles less judiciously and push the *halacha* to its outer limits in every case, it would create, within its own walls, an insulated, maximally-progressive halachic environment in which the sensibilities of certain individuals would be less offended. But it would without doubt lose that hard-earned influence, and forfeit its vital position as an example to the rest of the halachic world of how the divine plan can be expressed with the greatest openness and sensitivity.

from p. 4

panding—having *shaharit* daily and adding *maariv* twice a week. Alan Lonstein, a fellow student, agreed to be responsible for rounding up a daily *minyan* for *shaharit*, and we've been meeting ever since, with the exception of Monday's, as not to compete with the women's *tefilla* group. We now *daven* eleven times a week, the most frequent egalitarian *minyan* in the State of Israel.

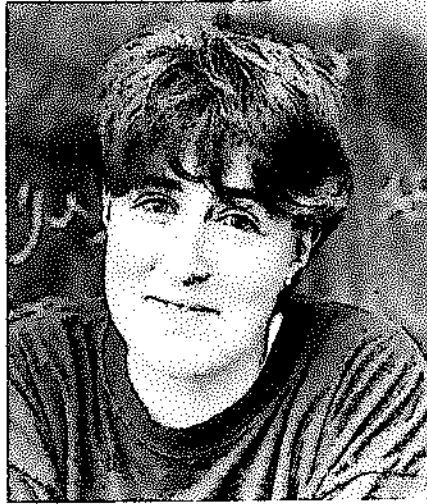
Pardes gives us a room, a *sefer tora* and an *aron kodesh*, but, unlike the regular *minyan*, there is no faculty participation, with the occasional exception of Levi. If our traditional egalitarian *minyan* did not exist, many of our members would not be *davening*, or would be *davening* either alone or elsewhere.

My decision to become a rabbi has been reinforced since coming to Pardes. I've not only discovered how much enjoyment I derive from learning, but also, given the success of our traditional egalitarian *minyan*, I now know it is possible to build a spiritual community based upon commitment to both observance and egalitarianism.

**CLAIRE GOLDWATER '91-'93, is from London. She did her degree in English literature at Oxford. She is working at the World Union of Jewish Students in Arad.**

I supported the idea of changing the format of the traditional *minyan* of ten men to one requiring ten women and ten men in fulfillment of the halachic definition, because I felt it would have enabled us to be innovative within an Orthodox framework. In practical terms, requiring ten women for the *minyan* would have had little effect on me, since I would have continued going every day just as I have until now. What would make this innovative is that it would change the way both men and women relate to and make up a community of prayer. Now I would feel the pressures a man does to get to Pardes on time, and now a man would see what it is like when he is dependent on the "other" for a *minyan*. Most of all, it would be stating at the level of *minhag/halacha* (custom/law), what is already assumed on a social level among students at Pardes, that there is a basic equality between men and women.

Disappointingly, this didn't happen. I'm not saying the faculty should set a new policy, that from now on a *minyan* at Pardes be defined as ten



women and ten men. Rather, the change should evolve organically, ten women continually coming until one day it would be assumed that the *minyan* would not start before ten women were there. The question remains why this did not happen.

Considering that most, if not all, the men were supportive of the change, I think one reason was inertia, or possibly indifference, on the part of many women. For women at Pardes last year, changing the format of "davening," or for that matter, "davening" in and of itself, was not a high priority. Another possibility is that women still do not define community in such a way as to see themselves an indispensable part. In any case, what this has shown me is that before we can innovate on a communal level, we must begin on a personal one.

I'm not sure that Pardes is the place where communal change will happen, but I am positive that it is where personal growth can. In two years at Pardes I have connected intellectually and emotionally with the beauty and brilliance of the texts. While I have never felt excluded by traditional Judaism, now I feel that there's a piece of it that is mine. I see that I think more in religious terms, and that I am feeling and acting more religiously, whether *davening*, giving *tzedaka*, or not engaging in *lashon hara* (speaking ill of others).

Significantly, learning at Pardes has allowed me to enter the dialogue between *halacha* and the twentieth century. In many ways this is a cooperative dialogue, with *halacha* adapting to and informing the way we now live. But, it is also a never-ending battle that we will always be in the midst of as long as we demand of Torah that

it have something to say to us and our concerns. Yet it is only in such a framework that a discussion about changing the format of the *minyan*, or even having a woman read *Megilla*, could take place. In this process, we are, in a sense, creating new *halacha*. For even if now nothing changes, we are pushing the discussion towards some time in the future when it might. At the same time, Pardes has taught me to confront difficulties and challenges in the Jewish world with greater love for tradition, and a sense that whatever happens, the great expanses of Jewish texts have something crucial to say to me. \*

**JEFF SULTAR '92-'93, is from Avon, Connecticut. He attended Williams College where he received a B.A. in English and Environmental Studies in 1984. He is in his fourth year at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College.**

I grew up in Connecticut with a firm Jewish identity, but my formal involvement in the Jewish community ended abruptly with my bar mitzva. When I was in my early twenties, I began to have an amorphous sense that something was important about being Jewish. I spent 27 months bicycling around the United States, working and meeting people. I encountered born-again Christians who confronted me with basic questions about what I valued in my life, worked on an Amish farm where I learned the true meaning of the word "community," and experienced the "joyous" side of Judaism during a week in Berkeley with the Habad and Aquarian *minyanim*.

By the end of my time on the road, I came to understand that being Jewish was at the center of my life. I realized that the next twist in the journey was rabbinical school. I am now in my fourth year at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College (RRC). My year at Pardes substituted for the year I would have studied rabbinic civilization at RRC. But even before rabbinical school, I had wanted to spend a year living and learning in Israel.

To me, *halacha* represents the best understanding of how to act in accordance with God. Although having emerged at an earlier period of Jewish history, *halacha* is important to us in this century because it is a concrete expression of hard won lessons of experience. It is an anchor, a "reality check," and a sign of humility that we're not necessarily smarter than pre-

vious generations. Even though I choose to be non-halachic, I see myself bound in tension with the *halacha*. For, just as Judaism has evolved through the centuries, integrating what is new and balancing it with the past, I realize that I too am in for a lifetime of adjustment.

For me, egalitarianism is a crucial aspect of Jewish practice. I was disappointed, therefore, by the decision of the Pardes faculty concerning the *Megilla* reading. Yet, I accepted it because I came to Pardes not to change the institution but to learn from it. It is what it is, and I appreciate the integrity of the faculty. I do not always agree with them, but they made a principled stand on this issue consistent with their best understanding of *halacha*. I appreciate that they do not waste my time with apologetics. In fact, rather than my wanting us to always be in agreement, it is because of the *quality* of our disagreement that I enjoy and value Pardes so much.



Being in a less egalitarian environment has helped me appreciate more fully what I had previously taken for granted—that an egalitarian community is essential for me. But the advantage of being at Pardes was that I was able to immerse myself in an environment that allowed me to study and explore traditional practice. In the States, I live in a liberal/progressive community, and an often-forgotten meaning of liberal is to be open to *each* of the perspectives that differ from one's own. Being part of the Pardes community not only has meant hearing what those more traditionally-observant than I have to offer, but has also increased my respect and appreciation of the depth and power of *halacha*. •

## NEWSBRIEFS:

- Film viewers from Pardes and the larger community attended two Evenings of Film, followed by a discussion led by Stuart Schoffman, columnist for *The Jerusalem Report*, on the relevance to contemporary Jewish life of *Gentleman's Agreement* and *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*. The program was organized by Pardes Board Members Fran Alpert and Libby Werthan.
- A *shiur* (learning session) in memory of Louis (Pinchas) Hellman ז"ל '87-'90, '91-'92, was attended by many who knew and loved him, from both within and outside the Pardes community. Entitled "*Kiddush HaChodesh: Renewing the Search for the Sanctity of Am Yisrael*," it was taught by faculty member, Meir Schweiger.
- Pardes welcomes two new members to its Board of Directors—Libby Werthan and David Ben Nach.
- Israel Defense Forces officers came to Pardes for group discussions with students and staff on issues of Jewish identity and Israel-diaspora relations. Part of their army training, the program was coordinated by Pardes faculty member, Kalman Neuman.
- In response to an invitation from Hadassah Women's Organization, Levi Lauer, aided by Ophir Yarden '82-'84, presented a 1-1/2 day program to 250 members of Hadassah's national board. Devoted to examining realities and complexities of the peace process, the program included visits to four Jewish settlements as well as frank and open discussions between Palestinians and Israelis.



## FACULTY PROFILE

Leah Rosenthal has been teaching Talmud at Pardes for five years. Born in Boston, she came on *aliya* with her family in 1972. High school in Netanya was followed by two years in the Israel Defense Force. Leah has a degree in Talmud and Jewish Philosophy from Hebrew University and a teaching degree from the Kerem Institute. She also teaches at Pelech High School for girls. Leah and her husband, Yoav, are parents of two daughters, Talia, two years old, and Hallel, two months old.

"I really enjoy teaching Pardes students. They are highly motivated and intelligent and bring to the study of Talmud a refreshing openness. Because the nature of Talmud is eclectic, and therefore relevant to almost every area of life, I find that the students' disparate backgrounds, specializations and training often help shed light on what we're studying. The excitement of having students who share my love of studying Talmud helps keep my outlook fresh and new."

### DESIGN YOUR OWN PARDES CLASS

Are you planning to be in Israel? What are the dates? . \_\_\_\_\_

Would you be interested in studying at Pardes? . \_\_\_\_\_

If so, what subject/s? . \_\_\_\_\_

Let us know your plans and perhaps we can put together a custom-made class for you, your family and friends.

For additional information contact:

*In North America:*

American Pardes Foundation  
P.O. Box 926/Avon, CT 06001  
Tel & Fax: 203-675-1431

*In Israel and elsewhere:*

Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies  
P.O. Box 8575, Jerusalem, Israel  
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Pardes is located at 29 Pierre Koenig, at the corner of Rivka.

that diversity within a single discipline of communal prayer, within an absolutely coherent framework of Pardes' halachic commitment.

Indeed, I think it impossible. Better, then, to institutionalize incongruity, principled inconsistency. Let Pardes institutionally "daven" לעל פי הלכה in accord with its staff's interpretation of those who decide Jewish law; and let its students organize "minyanim" at variance with that norm, which Pardes will readily facilitate under its roof.

Who better than I, who "davens" in both *minyanim* (far more often in one than the other), knows how readily this principled inconsistency can be misunderstood, misinterpreted, and maligned. It's worth the price. The tension it produces is, with few exceptions, educationally healthy, spiritually challenging and intellectually broadening. That's what Pardes needs to be about, even at the cost of more soothing, and frankly very pleasant, consensus, harmony, and ideological consistency. For we learn Torah, not only to study, but to search, and these *minyanim* in their difference and diversity are honest, serious and careful expressions of that search.

On some days, the singing of one *minyan* comes across the hall to penetrate the consciousness, and perhaps disrupt the concentration of its counterpart. There are few sounds sweeter than this cacophony. Yes, we also need to come together to resonate to the depth of a single, harmonious "niggun." We walk a fine line, a bridge of dialogue between differing religious needs, personal and communal expression and halachic discipline. It can be dizzying on this tight wire, a dizziness exhilarating in the educational and religious perspective it offers. •

## THE PARDES CONNECTION

news of classmates and staff. . .

and their babies...

**Leon Dow** '92-'93 is the author of *Volunteer and Internship Possibilities in Israel*, his project while a Dorot fellow at Pardes. The book is published by The Joint Authority for Jewish-Zionist Education, Jerusalem.

**Moshe Gresser** '83-'85, is the author of *Dual Allegiance, Freud as a Modern Jew*, 1994. Moshe is Assistant Professor in the Department of Philosophy and Religion at Colgate University.

**Bernie Steinberg**, Pardes faculty 1972-1982, is Hillel Director at Harvard University.

and their weddings...

**Debra Brief** '85-'86, to Bruce Hoffman. They are living in Hollywood, Florida where Debra works for the ExecuTrain Corporation as a computer training specialist, and Bruce is a neurologist.

**Yarden Fedder** '85-'87, to Ruthie Lavi. They are living in Jerusalem. Yarden works in field cartography and Ruthie is a tutor in computer training for the Ministry of Trade and Industry.

**Ayala Levin** '91-'92 and **David Kruss** '90-'91. The Levin-Kruss's are living in Jerusalem.

**Smadar Kedar** '88-'89, to Jim Bergman. They are living in Chicago where Smadar is doing research in education technology at The Institute for the Learning Sciences, Northwestern University. Jim is a paralegal for the city of Chicago law department.

**Elon Sunshine** '91-'92 and **Shira Rosenblatt** '91-'92. They are living in Los Angeles, California.

**Pnina Teitalbaum** '82-'84, to Jonathan Bordan. They are living in Toronto.

**Eudice (Beiner)** '82-'83 and **Richard (Bloomberg) Ben Or** '82-'83, are the parents of a son, Ayal Shachar. They are living in Jerusalem, where Eudice runs a customized gift basket service between the U.S. and Israel and Ricky works in computer software at Kivune.

**Michael Cytrin** '89-'90, and wife, Tzila Ovadia, are the parents of a son, Yonatan Yosef. They are living in Mevaseret Zion, where Michael is studying to become a rabbi at the Meretz program.

**Ariel (Larry) Goldstein** '89-'90, and wife, Yiscah, are the parents of a son, Josiah. They are living in Beit El.

**Moshe Gresser** '83-'85 and **Ruth Stoll** '81-'83, are the parents of a daughter, Rachel Noa. They are in the process of making *aliya*.

**Robin (Kahn) Gumani** '89-'90, and her husband are the parents of a daughter, Na'ama. They are living in Herzliya.

**Dan Kahn** '81-'82, and wife, Joan, are the parents of a daughter, Rachel. They are living in Beersheva.

**Chanan Kessler** '85-'86, and wife, Eve, are the parents of a daughter, Penina Yaffa. They are living in Palo Alto, California.

**Gavriel Meir** '83-'84, and wife, Michal, are the parents of a daughter, Lilach Ruth. They are living in the settlement of Elazar in Gush Etzion.

**Holly (Amster) Nosatzki** '87-'88, and husband, Zeevik, are the parents of a son, Shai. They are living in Netanya.

**Leah Rosenthal**, Pardes faculty, and husband, Yoav, are the parents of a daughter, Hallel.

**David Warren** '86-'87, and wife, Sari, are the parents of a son, Avraham (Avi) Moshe. They are living in West Hartford, Connecticut.

continued from p. 1

"Pardes People" and from Steve Mazer's well thought out Op Ed piece, "Walking a Fine Line." The following scorecard is just to help get oriented.

Claire Goldwater does not feel "excluded by traditional Judaism," and believes that "before we can innovate on a communal level, we must begin on a personal one." Matt Gerber is attracted to halachic Judaism while still struggling to find his place in it. For Wendy Goldberg and Jeff Sultar, egalitarianism is the preferred medium for nurturing Jewish sensibility. David Lerner brings us up to date on what is

happening currently in the egalitarian fold at Pardes. Michael (Shai) Cherry sees Pardes successfully walking a fine line between tradition and modernity. According to him, "Pardes is unorthodox, *not* non-Orthodox." Tobie Strauss takes Pardes to task for lack of consistency and failure to live up to its declared stance to treat women and men as intellectual and spiritual equals.

We commend all of these "position papers" to your reading.

Jane Kimchi

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